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ABSTRACT

The New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) testing program is the result of 1976 legislation. The major purpose, aside from establishing a uniform standard of pupil proficiency, has been to provide local districts information on individual pupil proficiency and identify program strengths and weaknesses. To better meet the needs of local districts, a survey was constructed to gauge the usefulness of the MBS tests and the various test score reports and reporting formats associated with the state testing program. The survey, which was sent to each district superintendent in May 1980, focused on: (1) program changes; (2) instructional changes; (3) administrative changes and (4) dissemination of information. For each of the first three areas, responses to the various questions were requested only if the MBS tests were used to make decisions resulting in changes. This document offers a thorough interpretation of all the findings, by school districts, in the survey. (Author/CE)

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Occasional Papers in Education

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DIVISION OF RESEARCH, PLANNING AND EVALUATION

DISTRICT UTILIZATION OF NEW JERSEY MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS

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DISTRICT UTILIZATION OF NEW JERSEY
MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) testing program came into existence as a result of legislation signed by Governor Brendan T. Byrne on September 22, 1976. This law, Chapter 97, Laws of 1976, amended Chapter 212, Laws of 1975 (the Thorough and Efficient Law). It mandated the establishment of uniform statewide standards of pupil proficiency in basic communications and computational skills to assure that all pupils attain at least minimal competency in these essential areas.

The Minimum Basic Skills tests were first administered in spring of 1978 to approximately 400,000 third, sixth, ninth and eleventh grade pupils. The MBS program was designed to provide information to educators on the strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils as well as those of their basic skills programs. Specifically, the Minimum Basic Skills test data are reported in terms of individual pupil performance on each item, cluster and total test, and item-by-item performance by classes, schools and districts. In addition, minimum levels of pupil proficiency (scores of 75 and 65 in reading and mathematics, respectively) have been established, and pupils confirmed as performing below these levels must receive remediation.

In May 1980, a survey of the usefulness of the Minimum Basic Skills tests and test scores and reports was conducted. (See the Appendix.) Questionnaires were distributed to all local district superintendents for completion by June 15, 1980. Of the 587

operating public school districts, 295 (50.3 percent) responded to at least part of this voluntary survey. This was a 2.6 percent increase over a similar survey conducted in 1976.* To maintain anonymity, districts were asked to record only their county, District Factor Group and Community Type.

The survey was divided into four main parts: Program Changes, Instructional Changes, Administrative Changes and Dissemination of Information. For each of the first three parts, the respondents were asked to identify whether information from several different types of tests was used to effect change in their reading and/or mathematics programs. If a positive response was given for use of the Minimum Basic Skills test, then respondents were asked to answer a series of questions related to their program. The following outline provides highlights of the data collected according to these categories.

I. PROGRAM CHANGES

- 73.1 percent of the responding districts used Minimum Basic Skills test data to modify their reading curricula
- 81.9 percent of the responding districts used Minimum Basic Skills test data to modify their mathematics curricula
- 96.3 percent of the responding districts rated the criterion-referenced (Phase I) interpretation procedures as useful
- 98.5 percent of the districts that used the Minimum Basic Skills tests to modify their reading curricula used Phase I of the Summary Reports to identify district strengths and weaknesses

*Rojas, Virginia P., District Utilization of the Statewide Testing Program. Trenton: Division of Research, Planning and Evaluation, New Jersey State Department of Education, June 1977.

- ▣ 97.8 percent of the districts that used the Minimum Basic Skills test to modify their mathematics curricula found the Phase I of their Summary Reports useful in identifying district strengths and weaknesses
- ▣ 94.7 percent of the districts that used the Minimum Basic Skills test to examine their reading program content involved classroom teachers in the process
- ▣ 94.9 percent of the districts that used the Minimum Basic Skills test to examine mathematics program content involved classroom teachers in the process

II. INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES

- ▣ 76.5 percent of the responding districts used the Minimum Basic Skills test to modify reading instruction
- ▣ 81.8 percent of the responding districts used the Minimum Basic Skills test to modify mathematics instruction
- ▣ 90.1 percent of the districts that used the Minimum Basic Skills test to modify reading instruction used classroom teachers to examine existing methods
- ▣ 92.1 percent of the districts that used the Minimum Basic Skills test to modify mathematics instruction used classroom teachers to examine existing methods

III. ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

- ▣ 48.9 percent of the responding districts used the Minimum Basic Skills test to initiate administrative (organizational) changes
- ▣ 51.9 percent of the districts that used the Minimum Basic Skills test to initiate the administrative changes did so because of the need to redirect district funds

IV. DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ON MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS

- ▣ 96.4 percent of the responding districts found the Minimum Basic Skills Roster, Individual Student and Summary Reports to be useful
- ▣ 88.8 percent of the responding districts found the Minimum Basic Skills Special Item Analysis Reports to be useful

Analysis of the data collected from this survey shows a marked increase in the current use of statewide testing data when compared to a similar survey conducted in June 1976. The increased use was most significant in the areas of program and instructional change.

INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) testing program is the result of legislation, Chapter 97, Laws of 1976, signed by Governor Brendan Byrne on September 22, 1976. This law amended Chapter 212, Laws of 1975 (the Thorough and Efficient Law), and mandated the establishment of uniform statewide standards of pupil proficiency in basic communication and computational skills to assure that all pupils attain at least minimal competency in these essential areas.

The major purpose of the Minimum Basic Skills testing program has been to provide information to local districts on individual pupil proficiency in basic skills, and to assist in the identification of program strengths and weaknesses. To meet this responsibility, test results are supplied to the districts in a variety of report forms, including information on both individual pupils and various test population groupings.

To better meet the needs of local districts, a survey was constructed to gauge the usefulness of the MBS tests and the various test score reports and reporting formats associated with the state testing program. The survey was sent to each district superintendent in May 1980, and focused on four areas of statewide testing utilization: 1) Program Changes, 2) Instructional Changes, 3) Administrative Changes, and 4) Dissemination of Information. For each of the first three areas, responses to the various questions were requested only if the MBS tests were used to make decisions resulting in changes.

By the return date of June 15, 1980, 50.3 percent (295) of the 587 operating public school districts had responded. This response rate reflects a 2.6 percent increase over a similar survey conducted in 1976. Districts were directed to respond anonymously, but were asked to identify their District Factor Group (DFG), Community Type (CT) and county. Even though only about half the districts responded, those respondents were fully representative of the types of districts throughout the state.

SURVEY POPULATION

The following tables describe the districts which responded to the survey. Table 1 shows the number of responding districts by county. The percent of districts responding from each county ranged from a low of 20 percent (Sussex) to a high of 85.7 percent (Salem). The most significant contribution came from Bergen County, representing 14.4 percent of all responding districts. Tables 2 and 3 present the responding districts by District Factor Group (DFG) and Community Type. The lowest response by DFG was from the vocational school districts, where only 21.1 percent of the districts returned surveys. The greatest response was from 144 districts in DFGs B, C and D (59 percent).

The response rate from districts according to Community Type was again lowest for the vocational school districts; however, the highest rate of response was from the urban school districts (53 percent).

TABLE 1

RESPONDING DISTRICTS BY COUNTY

COUNTY	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF STATE TOTAL	NUMBER OF RESPONDING	PERCENT RESPONDING	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONDING
Atlantic	25	4.2	14	56.0	4.8
Bergen	75	12.6	42	56.0	14.4
Burlington	45	7.6	17	37.8	5.8
Camden	39	6.6	18	46.2	6.2
Cape May	17	2.9	7	41.2	2.4
Cumberland	16	2.7	7	43.8	2.4
Essex	22	3.2	9	40.9	3.1
Gloucester	28	4.7	17	60.7	5.8
Hudson	14	2.4	6	42.9	2.1
Hunterdon	29	4.9	14	48.8	4.8
Mercer	11	1.9	6	54.5	2.1
Middlesex	26	4.4	13	50.0	4.5
Monmouth	51	8.6	24	47.1	8.2
Morris	41	6.9	23	56.1	7.9
Ocean	28	4.7	16	57.1	5.5
Passaic	20	3.4	10	50.0	3.4
Salem	14	2.4	12	85.7	4.1
Somerset	20	3.4	10	50.0	3.4
Sussex	25	4.2	5	20.0	1.7
Union	23	3.9	11	47.8	3.8
Warren	24	4.0	11	45.8	3.8
*	--	--	3	--	--
TOTAL	**593		295	50.3	100.0

*Did not identify county on survey

**Includes special services school districts for handicapped pupils. For purpose of calculations, 587 districts were used in the survey population.

TABLE 2

RESPONDENTS BY DISTRICT FACTOR GROUP

DISTRICT FACTOR GROUP	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF STATE TOTAL	NUMBER RESPONDING	PERCENT RESPONDING	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONDING
A	56	9.5	32	57.1	11.0
B, C, D	144	24.5	85	59.0	29.3
E, F, G	144	24.5	73	50.7	25.2
H, I, J	148	25.2	76	51.4	26.2
V	19	3.2	4	21.1	1.4
Z	76	12.9	19	25.0	6.6
*	--	1.0	6	--	--
TOTAL	587	--	295	50.3	100.0

*Did not identify district factor group on survey

TABLE 3

RESPONDENTS BY COMMUNITY TYPE

COMMUNITY TYPE	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS	PERCENT OF STATE TOTAL	NUMBER RESPONDING	PERCENT RESPONDING	PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONDING
Urban	155	26.1	82	53.0	28.7
Suburban	205	34.9	105	51.2	36.7
Rural	157	26.7	75	47.8	26.7
Regional	51	8.7	21	41.2	7.4
Vocational	19	3.2	3	15.8	1.1
*	--	1.5	9	--	--
TOTAL	587	--	295	--	--

*Did not identify community type on survey

RESULTS

PART I: PROGRAM CHANGES

Many school districts acknowledge the use of Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) Test results in making preliminary identification of pupils in need of remediation. This process is dependent on review of the MBS Rosters and Individual Pupil Reports that are returned to districts each spring soon after testing. However, districts have been encouraged to use additional MBS reports (class, school and district summary reports) to identify program strengths and weaknesses. Results showed that 73.1 percent (212) of the respondents used the MBS information to modify reading curriculum, while 81.9 percent (236) used the information to modify their mathematics curriculum.

The MBS Summary Reports are returned to districts in early September. At that time, interpretation of Phase I, the criterion referenced portion, is required for all class, school and district reports. For this interpretation, performance on each test item and cluster is evaluated based on expectations for each of the populations (class, school district). Phase II is the evaluation of district performance as measured against the performance of comparable districts. Districts were asked to rate the usefulness of the summary reports and interpretation data (Table 4) in making decisions about their curriculum. Results showed that the process and results of Phase I for identification of district/school strengths and weaknesses were judged to be very useful or somewhat useful by 96.3 percent (234) of the responding districts.

TABLE 4

RELATIVE UTILITY OF MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
TEST SCORE REPORTS

"How useful were each of the following
in making decisions about your curriculum?"

	VERY USEFUL ¹		SOMEWHAT USEFUL ¹		NOT USEFUL ¹	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Minimum Basic Skills Phase I Interpretation to Identify District Curriculum Strengths and Weaknesses	135	55.5	99	40.7	9	3.7
Minimum Basic Skills Phase I Interpretation to Identify School Curriculum Strengths and Weaknesses	134	55.8	97	40.4	9	3.8
Minimum Basic Skills Phase II Interpretation using:						
Community Type Data	35	14.8	150	63.3	52	21.9
District Factor Group Data	72	30.3	128	53.8	38	15.7
County Data	44	18.6	136	57.6	56	23.7
State Data	31	13.3	136	58.4	66	28.3
Comparison of District's Minimum Basic Skills Test Results with Those of Previous Years Using the Percentage of Students Meeting the Standard	125	50.6	97	39.3	25	10.1
Comparison of Standardized Test Results with Minimum Basic Skills Test Results	79	33.1	112	46.9	48	20.1
Comparison of Item-by-Item Performance on Summary Reports with Those of Previous Years	77	32.0	122	50.6	42	17.4
Comparison of Cluster-by-Cluster Performance on Summary Reports with Those of Previous Years	103	42.0	117	47.8	25	10.2

¹Number and percent of districts responding to this question.

Districts also used the MBS data to apply for, report on, and/or evaluate various federally funded projects or programs (Table 5). A number of districts made use of the data for Title I programs: 96 in applying, 83 reporting, and 84 for evaluation. The next highest use was in applying for Title IVB funds.

Additional responses were made to a series of questions on the use of MBS data but were made separately for reading and mathematics.

Based on the 206 districts that reported using MBS data to modify their reading curriculum, it was found that the overwhelming majority of districts involved their teachers and administrators in the examination, revision or modification of the course content (See Table 6). The most significant curriculum revision/modification occurred in the area of reading comprehension at all grade levels (See Table 7). For example, 71.5 percent of the responding districts that test at grade three, made revisions to the reading comprehension component of their third grade curriculum. Likewise, 79.6 percent of responding districts that test at grade eleven made curriculum revisions in the area of reading comprehension. The impact was almost as strong in the word recognition and study skills areas.

Additional data were collected on staff involvement in the examination, revision and/or addition of reading materials at the elementary or secondary school levels. These results can be found in Table 8.

TABLE 5

UTILIZATION OF MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST
RESULTS TO APPLY FOR, REPORT ON, OR EVALUATE
FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS	POSITIVE RESPONSES					
	APPLY		REPORT		EVALUATE	
	Number	% of Total Responses	Number	% of Total Responses	Number	% of Total Responses
Title I	96	32.5	83	28.1	84	28.5
Title IV-B	28	9.5	7	2.4	11	3.7
Title VII	3	1.0	1	0.3	2	0.7
Right to Read	4	1.0	1	0.3	3	1.0
Vocational Education	14	4.7	3	1.0	9	3.1
Special Education	6	2.0	8	2.7	10	3.4

TABLE 6

DISTRICTS WHICH INVOLVED STAFF IN
EXAMINATION AND/OR REVISION OF READING PROGRAMS

PERSONNEL INVOLVED	AREAS OF INVOLVEMENT			
	EXAMINATION OF COURSE CONTENT		REVISION OF MODIFICATION	
	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent
Reading Specialists	160	77.7%	144	69.9%
Classroom Teachers	195	94.7	184	89.3
Administrators	187	90.8	173	84.0
Students	19	9.2	10	4.9

*Based on number of districts which used the Minimum Basic Skills Test results to modify this reading curriculum

TABLE 7

GRADE LEVELS AT WHICH DISTRICTS USED
MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS TO REVISE CURRICULUM
IN THE SKILL AREAS LISTED

SKILL AREAS	GRADE LEVELS			
	K-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
	Number of Districts	Number of Districts	Number of Districts	Number of Districts
Word Recognition	105	98	98	74
Comprehension	118	138	120	86
Study Skills	94	130	108	75

TABLE 8

NUMBER OF DISTRICTS WITH STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN THE
EXAMINATION, REVISION, AND/OR ADDITION
OF READING MATERIALS BY GRADE LEVELS

		ELEMENTARY	SECONDARY	BOTH
Reading Specialists	Examination	69	34	44
	Revision	61	34	47
	Addition	65	31	46
Classroom Teachers	Examination	94	31	55
	Revision	84	31	58
	Addition	82	32	52
Administrators	Examination	84	27	54
	Revision	78	26	51
	Addition	77	26	50
Students	Examination	8	8	1
	Revision	2	4	1
	Addition	3	6	--

With regard to the use of MBS mathematics test data, 236 districts reported using the MBS test results to modify their mathematics curriculum. As was the case with the reading data, there was extensive involvement of staff, particularly classroom teachers and administrators (See Table 9). For example, 94.9 percent (224) of the respondents involved classroom teachers in the examination of course content, while 87.7 percent (207) of the districts involved administrators.

Of the districts responding to this section, 194 tested at grade three. Of this number, 153 (78.9 percent), revised the computation component of their curricula, with problem solving and applications being the next most popular area for change (See Table 10). At the secondary level, 119 districts said they tested at grade 11. Revisions to all four skill areas were about the same, with problem solving and applications 66.4 percent (79), being slightly higher than the others.

As with reading, data also were collected on the grade levels at which various staff were involved in examining, revising or adding new mathematics materials. Table 11 contains these data.

In summary, most respondents used MBS test data to modify their reading and/or mathematics curriculum. In addition, the survey responses showed that district staff, especially classroom teachers, were actively involved in the curriculum review process.

TABLE 9

DISTRICTS WHICH INVOLVED STAFF IN
EXAMINATION AND/OR REVISION OF READING PROGRAMS

PERSONNEL INVOLVED	AREAS OF INVOLVEMENT			
	EXAMINATION OF COURSE CONTENT		REVISION OR MODIFICATION	
	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent
Mathematics Specialists	140	59.3%	129	54.7%
Classroom Teachers	224	94.9	215	91.1
Administrators	207	87.7	199	84.3
Students	12	5.1	4	1.7

*Based on number of districts which used the Minimum Basic Skills Test results to modify this reading curriculum.

TABLE 10

GRADE LEVELS AT WHICH DISTRICTS USED
MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS TO REVISE CURRICULUM
IN THE SKILL AREAS LISTED

SKILL AREAS	GRADE LEVELS			
	K-3	4-6	7-9	10-12
	Number of Districts	Number of Districts	Number of Districts	Number of Districts
Computation	153	157	121	72
Number Concepts	143	149	122	70
Measurement and Geometry	135	153	127	75
Problem Solving and Applications	151	164	123	79

TABLE 11

NUMBER OF DISTRICTS WITH STAFF INVOLVEMENT IN THE
EXAMINATION, REVISION, AND/OR ADDITION OF
MATHEMATICS MATERIALS BY GRADE LEVEL

		ELEMENTARY	SECONDARY	BOTH
Mathematics Specialists	Examination	50	24	57
	Revision	42	23	56
	Addition	49	21	55
Classroom Teachers	Examination	109	31	70
	Revision	99	29	67
	Addition	94	27	65
Administrators	Examination	107	24	61
	Revision	93	24	59
	Addition	86	23	58
Students	Examination	6	2	2
	Revision	2	1	--
	Addition	2	1	2

PART II: INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES

This part of the survey inquired about the use of MBS data in the process of modifying reading and/or mathematics instruction. The responses showed that 71.9 percent (212) of the respondents used MBS data to modify reading instruction, while 77.6 percent (229) did so for mathematics.

When asked to identify staff involved in the examination and/or revision of their reading instructional methodology, classroom teachers, administrators and reading specialists were all involved by many districts (See Table 12). The same was true for mathematics, with the exception of the category mathematics specialist, which was proportionately lower than reading specialist (Table 13). This finding may be more semantic than real due to the fact that there is no certified position called "mathematics specialist."

Districts also were asked to identify by level (elementary, secondary) those instructional approaches and/or programs most affected by the MBS data. In reading, the programs most subject to revision were Remedial Reading, Small Group Instruction, Directed Reading and Corrective Reading (See Table 14). In mathematics, the programs most affected were Remedial Mathematics, Small Group Instruction, Individualized Instruction and Large Group Instruction (See Table 15).

In addition, districts were asked to identify other factors used in conjunction with MBS data to evaluate instruction. In reading, standardized tests similar to the MBS data and diagnostic tests received the most positive responses (See Table 16). In mathematics, the same two factors were again noted as having the most positive responses (See Table 17).

TABLE 12

DISTRICTS HAVING PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE
EXAMINATION AND/OR REVISION OF READING METHODOLOGY

PERSONNEL INVOLVED	AREAS OF INVOLVEMENT			
	EXAMINATION OF METHODOLOGY		REVISION OR MODIFICATION	
	Number	Percent*	Number	Percent
Reading Specialists	157	74.1%	144	67.9%
Classroom Teachers	191	90.1	180	84.9
Administrators	182	85.9	169	79.7
Students	10	4.7	2	1.0

*Based upon the number of responding districts which used Minimum Basic Skills data to modify reading instruction.

TABLE 13

DISTRICTS HAVING PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE
EXAMINATION AND/OR REVISION OF MATHEMATICS METHODOLOGY

PERSONNEL INVOLVED	AREAS OF INVOLVEMENT			
	EXAMINATION OF METHODOLOGY		REVISION OR MODIFICATION	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mathematics Specialists	122	53.3%	118	51.5%
Classroom Teachers	211	92.1	201	87.8
Administrators	197	86.0	187	81.7
Students	6	2.6	4	1.8

TABLE 14

THE EFFECT OF THE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS
ON THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES
AND/OR PROGRAMS IN READING BY GRADE LEVEL(S)*
(E-ELEMENTARY, S-SECONDARY, B-BOTH)

	ADDED			REVISED OR MODIFIED			LEFT UNCHANGED			DISCONTINUED		
	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B
Corrective Reading	12	13	6	56	21	38	33	8	9	--	--	--
Directed Reading	10	5	6	53	20	33	32	16	15	1	--	--
Enrichment for Gifted	30	8	12	20	6	10	37	20	28	--	--	--
Independent Reading	9	5	8	29	13	17	42	18	28	--	--	1
Indirect Instruction	5	1	2	23	12	13	42	15	28	1	--	1
Individualized Instruction	13	14	7	67	20	39	23	10	8	--	--	--
Large Group Instruction	9	4	5	48	16	34	33	14	13	2	2	--
Library Skills	18	9	5	43	20	32	33	10	18	--	1	--
Reading Laboratory	6	11	5	18	12	24	42	16	11	--	3	--
Remedial Reading	14	8	4	65	18	45	21	13	9	--	--	--
Right-to-Read	4	3	1	15	1	8	30	20	17	3	--	--
Small Group Instruction	14	13	4	70	16	39	20	12	9	--	--	--
Study Skills	14	13	6	49	16	37	26	10	13	--	--	--
Tutorial Instruction	11	9	2	24	6	16	22	18	19	--	2	--

*Numbers refer to number of districts responding.

TABLE 15

THE EFFECT OF THE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS
ON THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES AND/OR PROGRAMS
IN MATHEMATICS BY GRADE LEVEL
(E-ELEMENTARY, S-SECONDARY, B-BOTH)

	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS											
	Added			Revised or Modified			Left Unchanged			Discontinued		
	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B
Enrichment for Gifted	31	8	9	20	9	7	42	21	29	--	--	--
Independent Mathematics	9	1	2	36	8	20	34	20	24	--	--	--
Indirect Instruction	7	2	3	26	14	16	41	15	22	--	--	--
Individualized Instruction	12	12	8	70	19	39	23	10	10	--	--	--
Larger Group Instruction	11	1	4	70	21	39	20	16	12	2	1	--
Mathematics Laboratory	7	13	1	15	13	15	41	16	19	--	--	1
Remedial Mathematics	18	12	10	80	20	55	12	7	4	--	1	--
Small Group Instruction	15	11	6	81	20	49	12	7	9	--	--	--
Tutorial Instruction	12	12	1	27	9	13	27	17	19	1	1	--

TABLE 16

THE UTILITY OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN THE
EVALUATION OF READING INSTRUCTION IN CONJUNCTION
WITH THE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS

	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS		
	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful
Use of standardized tests similar to state tests	101	84	15
Use of diagnostic tests	102	88	9
Use of informal reading tests	59	106	20
Teacher made tests	81	91	16
Teacher and/or student feedback	90	89	8

TABLE 17

THE UTILITY OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS IN THE
EVALUATION OF MATHEMATICS INSTRUCTION IN CONJUNCTION
WITH THE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS

	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS		
	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful
Use of standardized tests similar to state tests	116	87	15
Use of diagnostic tests	108	88	9
Use of informal mathematics tests	57	117	24
Teacher made tests	91	98	15
Teacher and/or student feedback	97	80	12

PART III: ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

This section of the survey inquired about the use of test data to initiate administrative (organizational) changes. Of the districts completing the survey, 276 (93.6 percent) responded to the question pertaining to the use of test data. Of this number, 135 (48.9 percent) of the districts used MBS test data to initiate administrative change.

Districts reporting use of MBS data to make administrative decisions, were then asked to respond to an additional series of questions. Table 18 demonstrates the impact of funding on the organizational changes for reading and mathematics. Changes were effected for both reading and mathematics as a result of redirection of district funds in 51.9 percent (70) of the districts completing this section.

Additional information was collected on the types of organizational changes in the areas of utilization of staff, additions to staff and in-service programs, as can be seen in Tables 19, 20 and 21. By far, the greatest impact was in the implementation of districtwide in-service programs in basic reading skills. In this category, 65.9 percent (89) of the respondents indicated their involvement. It should also be noted that there was significant response as to the addition of reading and mathematics specialists at all grade levels. Although many districts have employed reading specialists in recent years, the use of mathematics specialists, particularly in elementary schools, is a relatively new form of staffing.

TABLE 18

DISTRICTS INDICATING ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING
USE OF FUNDS AS A RESULT OF MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
TEST DATA UTILIZATION

Cause	AREAS OF CHANGE		
	Reading	Mathematics	Both
Receipt of Additional Funds	2	7	53
Redirection of district funds	4	9	70

TABLE 19

DISTRICTS INDICATING ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES CONCERNING
USE OF STAFF AS A RESULT OF MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
TEST DATA UTILIZATION

Staff Utilization	AREAS OF CHANGE		
	Reading	Mathematics	Both
Departmentalization	3	5	23
Team-teaching	7	1	19
Differentiated staffing	1	3	32
Scheduling	2	8	75

TABLE 20

DISTRICTS INDICATING ADDITION OF STAFF
AS A RESULT OF MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
TEST DATA UTILIZATION

Staff Added	GRADE LEVELS REPORTED		
	K-5	6-8	9-12
Reading specialist(s)	22	24	26
Mathematics specialist(s)	30	28	26
Curriculum specialist(s)	8	8	10
Librarian(s)	5	2	0
Paraprofessional(s)	7	4	4
Teacher-aide(s)	17	14	13

TABLE 21

DISTRICTS INDICATING INITIATION OF IN-SERVICE WORKSHOPS AS
A RESULT OF MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST DATA UTILIZATION

Types of Programs	LEVELS OF PROGRAMS				
	Districtwide	Building Level	Central Administration	Grade Level	Cross-Grade Level
Methodology	44	43	13	26	20
Reading in content areas	35	42	9	23	21
Basic reading skills	89	45	12	33	30
Basic mathematics skills	51	56	13	35	34

-23-

PART IV: DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

This section of the survey concerned itself with the various methods which school districts use to inform their constituents of student performance on the MBS tests. Responses to questions concerning the usefulness of the various score reports which are part of the program were also elicited in this section.

Table 22 clearly indicates that many of the responding districts used meetings to present the MBS data to staff and the public. However, it can also be seen that district newsletters and articles in local newspapers were used extensively to inform parents and the community in general.

Table 23 presents information on how the Individual Student Report was disseminated to parents/guardians. As can be seen from the table, discussion of the results in parent/teacher conferences was used quite frequently, particularly in grades three and six. It should also be noted that the results were discussed with the student(s) in a significant number of districts.

The final table in this section (Table 24) presents information on the usefulness of the various reports produced, including the Special Item Analysis Reports, which are produced directly by the Office of State Assessment in response to requests from school district personnel.

The number of districts which responded positively was very encouraging. Even the largest negative response, for Title I Item Analysis, represented only 14.9 percent of the respondents. As can be seen from the table, the Minimum Basic Skills Roster and the Individual Student Report were judged to be the most useful.

TABLE 22

METHODS UTILIZED FOR THE RELEASE OF MBS TEST RESULTS

RECIPIENTS	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS BY CHANNELS OF REPORTING		
	MEETINGS	NEWSPAPERS	DISTRICT NEWSLETTER
Teachers/Staff	276	74	87
Parents	178	193	149
Community	158	229	121
Boards of Education	275	80	73
Press	167	---	66

TABLE 23

PROCEDURES USED TO DISSEMINATE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
INDIVIDUAL STUDENT REPORT FORMS

Procedures	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS BY GRADE LEVELS			
	Third	Sixth	Ninth	Eleventh
Mailed home	59	64	69	71
Given to students to take home	149	141	51	46
Discussed in parent/teacher conference	143	138	39	35
Discussed in parent/counselor conference	32	50	70	70
Placed in student file	206	204	117	113
Discussed with students	90	108	87	84

TABLE 24

UTILITY OF VARIOUS MBS REPORTS

REPORT	VERY USEFUL	SOMEWHAT USEFUL	NOT USEFUL	PERCENT VERY/SOMEWHAT USEFUL
Minimum Basic Skills Roster	205	69	4	98.6
Individual Student Report	207	71	4	98.6
District Summary Report	179	87	11	96.1
School Summary Report	181	81	11	96.0
Class Summary Report	152	100	20	92.7
General Item Analysis	121	69	11	94.5
District Designed Report	77	70	23	86.5
State Compensatory Education Reading and/or Mathematics	112	62	21	89.2
Title I Reading and/or Mathematics	96	52	26	85.1

SUMMARY

The New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) testing program is the result of legislation. Tests, with accompanying minimum standards, are administered to identify students' proficiencies in the minimum essential skills. However, a total score for each student tested is only the beginning. What has made the MBS test an effective tool is the type of data provided and how it is being used.

The information in this report clearly confirms what has been expressed verbally by many educators throughout the state, that the MBS data is a valuable indicator of student and program strengths and weaknesses and is being used effectively in districts throughout the state.

The data collected as a result of testing approximately 400,000 students each year provides districts with an indication of where they should focus their energy and resources to present their students with the strongest basic skills program possible. As with the data for each student, the MBS data should not be used in isolation from other information. As each student's assessment should be comprehensive in nature, so should the assessment of a district's program, instruction, methodologies and organization.

The response from districts, as presented in this report, clearly indicates the MBS program is more than just a single score presented annually. The report formats have been judged to be of high utility and the information gleaned from them has contributed, at least to some degree, to the decisions being

made about each district's basic skills program.

It is important that efforts be continued to improve and expand the use of the MBS data by teachers, administrators and parents. It is with this in mind that the Office of Assessment invites educators throughout the state to send in examples of the methods and techniques employed for the use of the MBS test results. Eventually, this office would be able to prepare a comprehensive, but concise index of these uses and distribute them to all districts throughout the state. At the very least, the Office of Assessment could act as a clearinghouse to provide the greatest possible audience to the many approaches to test utilization being implemented in the state's public schools.

APPENDIX

NEW JERSEY MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
TESTING PROGRAM
SURVEY

HOW HAVE YOU USED THE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS?

UTILIZATION OF THE
NEW JERSEY MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS

MAY 1980

New Jersey State Department of Education
Office of State Educational Assessment
225 West State Street, P.O. Box 2019
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

P.T.M. NO. 100.26

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEW JERSEY MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS
TESTING PROGRAM
SURVEY

HOW HAVE YOU USED THE MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS?

UTILIZATION OF THE
NEW JERSEY MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS TEST RESULTS

One purpose of the New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) Testing Program is to provide information to assist in educational planning and decision-making. This survey is being conducted to collect information on local district use of statewide test data. The information collected will assist us in making the program as effective as possible in meeting the needs of the pupils, schools and districts throughout the state.

Four parts are included in this instrument. They are: Program Changes (revision or modification of curriculum), Instructional Changes (how teaching methods were altered), Administrative Changes (staff, funds and training), Dissemination of Information (procedures used in reporting the results to the public).

Please note variations in the instructions for recording responses. Generally, responses may be made by circling a number or placing a check mark (✓) in the appropriate column(s). Other times you are asked to respond by inserting appropriate grade level(s).

The completed survey form should be returned by June 15, 1980 to:

Mr. Carl I. Johnson
Manager, State Testing Program
New Jersey State Department of Education
Office of State Educational Assessment
225 West State Street, P.O. Box 2019
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

SURVEY

UTILIZATION OF THE NEW JERSEY MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS (MBS) TEST RESULTS

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

COUNTY _____					5-6
COMMUNITY TYPE _____					7
DISTRICT FACTOR GROUP _____					8
GRADES TESTED (please circle)	3	6	9	11	9-12

PART I: PROGRAM CHANGES

1. Was information from any of the following types of tests used to modify the reading curriculum? (you may check more than one)

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	
Commercial Tests	___	___	New Jersey MBS Test	___	___	13-1
Locally Developed Tests	___	___	Other (please specify) _____			15

2. Was information from any of the following types of tests used to modify the mathematics curriculum? (you may check more than one)

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	
Commercial Tests	___	___	New Jersey MBS Test	___	___	17-1
Locally Developed Tests	___	___	Other (please specify) _____			19-2

The following questions in Part I are to be answered only if you answered YES to the New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) Test in 1 or 2 above.

3. Were Minimum Basic Skills Test results used to apply for, report on, or evaluate any of the following federally funded projects/programs? (more than one use may be checked for each)

	<u>Apply</u>	<u>Report</u>	<u>Evaluate</u>	
Title I	—	—	—	21-2
Title IV-B	—	—	—	24-26
Title VII	—	—	—	27-29
Right To Read	—	—	—	30-31
Vocational Education	—	—	—	33-34
Special Education	—	—	—	36-37
Other (please specify) _____				

4. How useful were each of the following in making decisions about your curriculum? (please circle)

	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Somewhat Useful</u>	<u>Not Useful</u>	
<u>Phase I Interpretation</u>				
Identification of district strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	39
Identification of school strengths and weaknesses	1	2	3	40
<u>Phase II Interpretation</u>				
Community Type Data	1	2	3	41
District Factor Group Data	1	2	3	42
County Data	1	2	3	43
State Data	1	2	3	44
<u>Other</u>				
Comparison of district's Minimum Basic Skills Test results with those of previous years using the percentage of students meeting the standard	1	2	3	45
Comparison of standardized test results with Minimum Basic Skills test results	1	2	3	46
Comparison of item-by-item performance on summary reports with those of previous years	1	2	3	47
Comparison of cluster-by-cluster performance on summary reports with those of previous years	1	2	3	48

READING

5. Which of the following persons were involved in examining and/or revising course content? (both may be checked whenever applicable)

	Examination of Course Content	Revision or Modification	
Reading Specialist	—	—	49—
Classroom Teachers	—	—	51—
Administrators	—	—	53—
Students	—	—	55—
Other (please specify) _____			

6. Check (✓) the grade level(s) where revisions or modifications were made in the skill areas listed below.

	K-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	
Word Recognition	—	—	—	—	57—
Comprehension	—	—	—	—	61—
Study Skills	—	—	—	—	65—
Other (please specify) _____					

7. Check (✓) the grade level(s) (E-elementary, S-secondary, B-both), where individual(s) listed below were involved in the examination, revision, and/or addition of reading materials.

	Examination of Existing Material			Revision/ Modification of Materials			Addition of New Materials or Skills Array			
	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	
Reading Specialist	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	69—
Classroom Teachers	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	72—
Administrators	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	75—
Students	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	78—
Other (please specify) _____										

MATHEMATICS

8. Which of the following persons were involved in examining and/or revising course content? (both may be checked whenever applicable)

	Examination of Course Content	Revision or Modification	
Mathematics Specialist	—	—	5-6
Classroom Teachers	—	—	7-8
Administrators	—	—	9-10
Students	—	—	11-12
Other (please specify) _____			

9. Check (✓) the grade level(s) where revisions or modifications were made in the skill areas listed below.

	K-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	
Computation	—	—	—	—	13-16
Number Concepts	—	—	—	—	17-20
Measurement and Geometry	—	—	—	—	21-24
Problem Solving and Applications	—	—	—	—	25-28
Other (please specify) _____					

10. Check (✓) the grade level(s) (E-elementary, S-secondary; B-both), where individual(s) listed below were involved in the examination, revision, and/or addition of mathematics materials.

	Examination of Existing Material			Revision/ Modification of Materials			Addition of New Materials or Skills Array			
	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	
Mathematics Specialist	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29-31
Classroom Teachers	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	32-34
Administrators	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35-37
Students	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	38-40
Other (please specify) _____										

PART II: INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES

11. Was information from any of the following types of tests used to modify instruction in reading? *(you may check more than one)*

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	
Commercial Tests	___	___	New Jersey MBS Test	___	___	41-42
Locally Developed Tests	___	___	Other <i>(please specify)</i>	___	___	43-44

12. Was information from any of the following types of tests used to modify instruction in mathematics?

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	
Commercial Tests	___	___	New Jersey MBS Test	___	___	45-46
Locally Developed Tests	___	___	Other <i>(please specify)</i>	___	___	47-48

The following questions in Part II are to be answered only if you answered YES to the New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) Test in 11 or 12 above.

READING

13. Which of the following persons were involved in the examination and/or revision of instructional methodology? *(both may be checked whenever applicable)*

	<u>Examination of Existing Methods</u>	<u>Revision or Modification</u>	
Reading Specialist	___	___	49-50
Classroom Teachers	___	___	51-52
Administrators	___	___	53-54
Students	___	___	55-56
Other <i>(please, specify)</i>	_____		

14. By checking (✓) the grade level(s) (E-elementary, S-secondary, B-both), indicate the effect of the Minimum Basic Skills test results on the following instructional approaches and/or programs.

	Added			Revised or Modified			Left Unchanged			Discontinued			
	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	
Corrective Reading . . .	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	57-60
Directed Reading	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61-64
Enrichment for Gifted .	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65-68
Independent Reading . .	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	69-72
Indirect Instruction . .	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	73-76
Individualized Instruction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77-80
Large Group Instruction.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	*5-8
Library Skills	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9-12
Reading Laboratory . . .	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13-16
Remedial Reading	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17-20
Right-to-Read	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21-24
Small Group Instruction.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25-28
Study Skills	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29-32
Tutorial Instruction . .	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33-36
Other (please specify) _____													

15. How useful were each of the following factors in the evaluation of instruction in conjunction with the Minimum Basic Skills test results? (please circle)

	Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful	
Use of standardized tests similar to state tests	1	2	3	37
Use of diagnostic tests	1	2	3	38
Use of informal reading tests	1	2	3	39
Teacher made tests	1	2	3	40
Teacher and/or student feedback	1	2	3	41
Other (please specify) _____				

MATHEMATICS

16. Which of the following persons were involved in the examination and/or revision of instructional methodology? (both may be checked whenever applicable)

	Examination of Existing Methods	Revision or Modification	
Mathematics Specialist	—	—	42-43
Classroom Teachers	—	—	44-45
Administrators	—	—	46-47
Students	—	—	48-49
Other (please specify) _____			

17. By checking (✓) the grade level(s) (E-elementary, S-secondary, B-both), indicate the effect of the Minimum Basic Skills test results on the following instructional approaches and/or programs.

	Added			Revised or Modified			Left Unchanged			Discontinued			
	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	E	S	B	
Enrichment for Gifted	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	50-51
Independent Mathematics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	54-55
Indirect Instruction	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	58-61
Individualized Instruction	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	62-63
Large Group Instruction	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	66-67
Mathematics Laboratory	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	70-73
Remedial Mathematics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	74-75
Small Group Instruction	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	78-81
Tutorial Instruction	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	82-85
Other (please specify) _____													86-90

18. How useful were each of the following factors in the evaluation of instruction in conjunction with the Minimum Basic Skills test results? *(please circle)*

	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Somewhat Useful</u>	<u>Not Useful</u>	
Use of standardized test similar to state tests	1	2	3	13
Use of diagnostic tests	1	2	3	14
Use of informal mathematics tests	1	2	3	15
Teacher made tests	1	2	3	16
Teacher and/or student feedback	1	2	3	17
Other <i>(please specify)</i> _____				

PART III: ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

19. Was information from any of the following types of tests used to initiate administrative (organizational) changes? *(you may check more than one)*

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>		<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	
Commercial Tests	—	—	New Jersey MBS Test	—	—	18-19
Locally Developed Tests	—	—	Other <i>(please specify)</i> _____			20-2

The following questions in Part III are to be answered only if you answered YES to the New Jersey Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) Test in 19 above.

20. Administrative changes were effected as a result of:

	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Both</u>	
Receipt of additional funds	—	—	—	22
Redirection of district funds	—	—	—	23
Other <i>(please specify)</i> _____				

21. Administrative changes were evidenced in the following:

	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Math</u>	<u>Both</u>	
A. <u>Utilization of Staff</u>				
Departmentalization	—	—	—	24
Team-teaching	—	—	—	25
Differentiated Staffing	—	—	—	26
Scheduling	—	—	—	27
Other (please specify) _____				

	<u>K-5</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>9-12</u>	
B. <u>Addition of Staff</u>				
Reading Specialist(s)	—	—	—	28-30
Mathematics Specialist(s)	—	—	—	31-32
Curriculum Specialist(s)	—	—	—	33-36
Librarian(s)	—	—	—	37-38
Paraprofessional(s)	—	—	—	39-41
Teacher Aide(s)	—	—	—	42-45
Other (please specify) _____				

	<u>Dist. Wide</u>	<u>Bldg. Level</u>	<u>Cent. Admn.</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Cross- Grade Level</u>	
C. <u>In-Service Programs and/or Workshops were conducted:</u>						
Methodology	—	—	—	—	—	46-51
Reading in Content Areas	—	—	—	—	—	52-55
Basic Reading Skills	—	—	—	—	—	56-60
Basic Mathematics Skills	—	—	—	—	—	61-65
Other (please specify) _____						

PART IV: DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
ON MINIMUM BASIC SKILLS RESULTS

Card No. 1
ID#2-1

22. Information on the Minimum Basic Skills test results was reported in the following manner:

	<u>Meetings</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>District Newsletter</u>	
To teachers/staff	—	—	—	66-68
To parents	—	—	—	69-71
To community	—	—	—	72-74
To board of education	—	—	—	75-77
To press	—	—	—	78-79
Other ways of reporting _____				

23. Indicate by grade level the procedure(s) used to disseminate Individual Student Report Forms.

	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	
Mailed home	—	—	—	—	*5-8
Given to students to take home	—	—	—	—	9-12
Discussed in parent/teacher conference	—	—	—	—	13-15
Discussed in parent/counselor conference	—	—	—	—	17-20
Placed in student file	—	—	—	—	21-23
Discussed with students	—	—	—	—	24-26
Other (please specify) _____					

24. The following Minimum Basic Skills Reports were:
(please circle)

	<u>Very Useful</u>	<u>Somewhat Useful</u>	<u>Not Useful</u>	
Minimum Basic Skills Roster	1	2	3	29
Individual Student Report	1	2	3	30
District Summary Report	1	2	3	31
School Summary Report	1	2	3	32
Class Summary Report	1	2	3	33
<u>Special Item Analysis Reports</u>				
<u>Requested by Districts</u>				
General Item Analysis	1	2	3	34
District Designed Report	1	2	3	35
State Compensatory Education				
Reading and/or Mathematics	1	2	3	36
Title I Reading and/or Mathematics	1	2	3	37

COMMENTS

[illegible]